Michael Gillen. "Roots of Opposition: The Critical Response to U.S. Indochina Policy, 1945-1954" (NYU Diss. 1991)

CHAPTER III

SAILING INTO WAR (1945)

> "[the Vietnamese] all spoke to us of their hatred of the French and their wonderment at the Americans [for] bringing the French invaders back."
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> -- Henry Dooley, crewmember
> S.S. Georgetown Victory, 1945

"Cochinchina is burning," Lt. Col. Peter Dewey wrote from Saigon in late September 1945, "the French and British are finished here, and we ought to clear out of Southeast Asia." As an intelligence officer with the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), Dewey was one of the first Americans on the scene in Vietnam in the weeks following V-J Day, and one of the first to warn of the danger of involvement in the colonial war quickly brewing in France's onetime "balcony on the Pacific." He also became the first of nearly 59,000 Americans to die in the Vietnam War.

That the stage was set for wars of liberation against colonial powers in the Far East was obvious to

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1 Archimedes L. A. Patti, Why Vietnam? Prelude to America's Albatross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 320.

2 In charge of the EMBANKMENT project in Saigon, Dewey's mission was to gather information on the status of Allied POWs and Civilian Internees, check out allegations of war crimes, and determine the status of U.S. property in the area. His message was received in Hanoi on September 24, two days before he was killed in Saigon. Patti, 320-322. See also Ronald H. Spector, Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U.S. Army in Vietnam, 1941-1960 (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 67.

even the most casual observers in late 1945, and Vietnam loomed as one of the more likely sites of confrontation, as Dewey had accurately noted. On the very day of the Japanese surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay, in fact, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, declared its independence from France. Using language taken from the American Declaration of Independence, and written with help from sympathetic American military personnel on hand to witness the event, the Vietnamese declaration began:

> We hold these truths that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

And underscoring the Vietnamese will to resist the return of French power to Indochina, banners stretched across Hanoi streets read, in English: "Independence or death."[4] To American observers on the scene, it was clear France could not easily pick up where it had left off in Vietnam before the war. As Major Archimedes Patti, who was in charge of Secret Intelligence operations for the O.S.S. in Indochina, wrote in a brief to General Albert Wedemeyer, his superior in China, "This former French colony no long-

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3 Gareth Porter, ed., Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, Vol. I (Stanfordville, NY: Earl M. Coleman, 1979), 64-65.

4 The use of this slogan is reported, for example, in Patti, 164, 240, 249.

er looks to France for tutelage and protection and will in all probability resist with all means available the return of the status quo ante."[5]

American operatives in Hanoi and Saigon, convinced the Vietnamese were fully committed to securing and exercising the rights of self-determination "promised" by the Atlantic Charter, not only warned of imminent colonial war and reccommended United States withdrawal from the area, but also argued against providing assistance to France for the purpose of returning to Vietnam.[6] This was in keeping with what was understood to be the policy of Franklin Roosevelt, but was already, without their knowing it, at odds with the emerging policy of the Truman Administration.[7]

The Vietnamese were counting on the Atlantic

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5 Patti, 278. Some two dozen Americans were in Hanoi by the end of August 1945, operatives of the O.S.S. and Air Ground Aid Section (AGAS), which had arrived first--on August 22--and under the command of Patti. They were soon joined by a small U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Military Govern-ment group (CAMG) under the command of Col. Stephen Nordlinger. See Spector, 56.

6 Patti had written to General Wedemeyer in Kunming, for example: "Viet Minh strong and belligerent and definately anti-French. Suggest no more French be permitted to enter French Indo-China and especially not armed." Spector, 57.

7 That Roosevelt's anti-colonialism influenced the thinking of American officers in Vietnam, including Peter Dewey, is revealed in Patti's book. Patti discussed FDR's policies, in fact, including his opposition to the return of the French to Vietnam, during Patti's last visit with Ho Chi Minh. See Why Viet Nam?, 310, 367.

Charter--particularly its clause about self-determination--as a key to their newly proclaimed nation's future, and Americans such as Peter Dewey and Archimedes Patti revealed that they, too, looked to the Atlantic Charter, co-authored by Roosevelt, as a legitimate guide for American policy and leadership in Southeast Asia. In his September brief to Wedemeyer, for example, Patti noted that the Vietnamese, encouraged

> by American statements of anti-colonialism and promises of restoring sovereign rights and self-government to those who have been forcibly deprived of them [Atlantic Charter, Point Three] ....look to the United States for moral support, at least, for 'American trusteeship' at most.

As intent as the Vietnamese nationalists were at gaining their independence from France, the French were determined to return to their "balcony on the Pacific" in Vietnam. By September, in fact, if not earlier, one of the last hurdles to French plans--the previously unsupportive Indochina policy of Franklin Roosevelt--had been largely surmounted. If the United States offered nothing

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8 Patti, 268. Patti makes several references to the Atlantic Charter in his account of the period. See, Why Vietnam?, 103, 233, 245, 268, 299, 332, 335, 336, 368-69, 380; Spector, 60. The extent to which Americans in Vietnam were sympathetic to the Vietnamese cause is also reflected in the formation of the Vietnamese-American Friendship Association in October 1945. See George McT. Kahin, Intervention: How America Became Involved In Vietnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 14, 438. For the constitution of the VAFA see Porter, Vietnam, I, 82-83.

else, it would not oppose the return of France to Indochina. After Roosevelt's death, the French had been reassured, as early as the UN Conference in San Francisco, that the United States "did not question" their sovereignty in Indochina. This policy was reiterated to de Gaulle during his visit to Washington in August 1945, and he noted in his diary afterwards that "Indochina from one day to the next became accessible to us once again."[9]

Charles de Gaulle was aware of the shift in Indochina policy even if the first Americans to enter Vietnam after the war were not. France was, however, looking for more than just moral support and a vague statement of policy from the United States if her plans to return to Vietnam were to succeed. Having had her own fleet of ocean-going vessels largely destroyed during the war, France desperately needed ships--as well as other forms of military equipment--to transport the thousands of French and colonial troops that would be required to reestablish control in Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China.

The Allied Chiefs of Staff knew that transport ships would be crucial to operations in Asia, as records

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9 See Charles de Gaulle, The War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle: Salvation, 1944-1946, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 242.

of their meetings at Potsdam reveal.[10] Charles de Gaulle was also well aware of this simple logistical reality: without ships--merchant as well as naval types--Vietnam and its resources would be out of reach, and waging war there would be equally impossible. Months before World War II ended, therefore, he had begun searching for transport ships to carry French troops back to Indochina. And he used every political weapon at his disposal--including playing upon American fears of Soviet encroachment in Southeast Asia--to secure his promise for logistical support.[11] Though the United States might have utilized the leverage of its own political and economic strength to force concessions from France, it chose--with a series of deliberate policy decisions--not to do so, and soon provided much of the logistical and material support for which de Gaulle had been lobbying.

While the apparent reversal of policy regarding Indochina and colonialism in Southeast Asia was viewed by

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10 FRUS, Conference at Berlin (Potsdam) 1945. II. 1191-1193.

11 See Caffery to Secretary of State, March 13, 1945, FRUS, 1945, VI, 300; Noel Clinton Eggleston, "The Roots of Commitment: United States Policy Toward Vietnam, 1945-1950." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Georgia, 1977) 38-39; William Appleman Williams, Thomas McCormick, Lloyd Gardner, Walter LaFeber, eds., America in Vietnam: A Documentary History (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1985), 61.

many critics as contrary to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and, indeed, the stated goals of the war against Germany and Japan, it actually reflected the new "realities" of the postwar world and the concerns of American policy-makers with Soviet power. Additionally, as some historians have argued, the American acquiesence in French demands was consistent with the agenda of "liberal capitalism" which had been a guiding force behind United States foreign policy since the Wilson Administration, if not before. If United States policy in Asia appeared contradictory and willing to compromise on certain principles, it was merely a reflection of this system which, while advocating such principles as self-determination, put strategic and economic concerns higher on the list of priorities.[12]

De Gaulle had actually begun his quest for ships before the conference at Yalta, directing his efforts at President Roosevelt, rather than Great Britain, as leader of the country that had astonished the world with its unprecedented shipbuilding feats during the war.[13] It was

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12 For an analysis of liberal capitalism as it pertains to U.S. Asian policy, see Andrew J. Rotter, The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press, 1987). See also page 112, n. 19, below.

13 Between 1941 and 1945 the United States Maritime Commission constructed some 5,777 ships, 414 of which were of the "Victory" Class (the type that would be used

no secret that FDR was reluctant to assist the French to return to Vietnam, and it was, therefore, not surprising that de Gaulle was disappointed when he first approached Roosevelt with a request for transport ships for later use in Indochina.

Roosevelt later confided, in a private discussion with Stalin at Yalta, that he had been approached by de Gaulle with a request for ships to transport French troops to Indochina. According to Charles E. Bohlen, FDR's secretary and interpreter, Stalin "inquired where de Gaulle was going to get the troops." Roosevelt replied that "de Gaulle said he was going to find the troops when the President could find the ships, but the President added that up to the present he had been unable to find the ships."[14]

It was not until his trip to Washington some four months after Roosevelt's death that de Gaulle finally succeeded in securing a promise for American troopships. This development, which seemed to directly contradict official statements that the United States would not assist the French, was confirmed in September when Jeffer-

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to transport French troops to Vietnam in late 1945). See Frederic C. Lane, Ships for Victory: A History of Shipbuilding Under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951).

14 "Charles Bohlen's Minutes of the Roosevelt-Stalin Meeting at Livadia Palace, February 8, 1945," FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington: USGPO, 1955), 770.

son Caffery, the American ambassador to France, reported through diplomatic channels that France had "expressed deep appreciation for the shipping the United States had agreed to make available in the Pacific."[15]

While American officials in Washington and France were aware the United States had agreed to "make available" shipping for moving French troops in the Pacific, this sign of a shifting Indochina policy was not revealed to either O.S.S. operatives in Vietnam, nor the American public in general. Consequently, as communications from Patti, Dewey and others reveal, many of those in the field were left in the dark as to the intent and actual implementation of policy. As Patti noted later, in summing up the role the United States seemed to be playing in Southeast Asia immediately following defeat of Japan,[16]

> the United States found itself in the position of broker between the French and Chinese, between the British and Chinese, and between the French and the Vietnamese. If that was to be our role in China, neither Theater nor [the American] Embassy [in China] had been so instructed.

If United States Indochina policy was unclear to

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15 Department of State: Telegram No. 17 (sent via U.S. Army Signal Corps), September 22, 1945, "French and Indo-China," Caffery (Paris) to AMEMBASSY (Chungking), 2-3, as quoted in Patti, 380.

16 Patti, 277. Patti refers to being in the field and "still lacking guidance on America's policy." See Why Vietnam?, 280.

those Americans actually in Vietnam, the American public was even more in the dark as to what was happening there. But dispatches coming out of Asia were already beginning to bring the postwar developments in the region to the attention of many American citizens, and prompted initial signs of concern and even outright opposition to the policy--or what was perceived as policy.

That concern with the Truman Administration's emerging Asian policy in 1945 was not confined to a narrow element within the American electorate, but included those on the right and center, as well as the left, was revealed in September, as it had been during the first weeks and months of the new administration. As noted in an earlier chapter, the arguments of right-wing conservatives, liberal New Dealers and anti-colonialists, members of the clergy, representatves of the African-American community, and those on the far left often overlapped--found some common ground even if their perspectives were often radically divergent. In the later years of the Vietnam War, these diverse elements would come together to give cohesive strength to the anti-war movement. In 1945, however, they were just individual voices of caution and dissent.

Aside from the internal warnings and grumblings, and allusions to the Atlantic Charter from ambassadors and

lesser field operatives within the Truman Administration, others registered concern and, in some cases, protest at the direction United States Indochina policy seemed to be heading in September 1945. As could be expected, the Socialist Workers Party reacted strongly to reports of American involvement in Vietnam. In a September 26 telegram to President Truman, the SWP's Joseph Cannon noted that

> American troops have intervened in the struggle of the Indochinese people for freedom from the oppressive rule of French imperialism and that the United States troops in Hanoi broke up a demonstration by Annamese demanding the independence of their country. In Saigon, British and French troops in collaborating with the Japanese garrison are reported shooting down the Indochinese people.

The telegram concluded by saying the SWP protested

> vigorously against these Allied attempts to suppress the independence movement of the Indochinese people and to deny them the freedom which the United States and other Allied powers promised to all peoples in the Atlantic Charter. We request from you, Mr. President, a public assurance that the armed forces of the United States will not henceforth be used to oppose and frustrate the just demand of the people of Indochina for full freedom and independence.

While the SWP was not likely to be taken seriously

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17 The Militant, October 6, 1945, 1. While the SWP's charge that U.S. troops were involved in breaking up a demonstration in Hanoi was probably far-fetched, considering both the sympathies and numbers of American personnel then in Hanoi, its description of British and Japan collaboration in the south can easily be supported by available evidence.

by President Truman--if considered at all--its description of events in Indochina is offered here for two reasons; first, to reflect what was known or perceived to be known about the situation in Indochina, at a time when the public was receiving very little information. Second, what the SWP did have to say, however stridently it may have been phrased, reflected more widespread sentiment on the issue of colonialism, and the sentiment of many Americans who did command more attention and respect among a greater constituency. And if some of the more moderate voices of dissent refrained from "protesting vigorously" against Truman's Asian policy, for the time being anyway, they were not averse to offering their own warnings as to how the United States should live up to its principles in dealing with colonialism in the postwar world.

Congressman Harold Knutson, Republican from Minnesota, serves as a case in point. In a eulogy address delivered in Congress on October 1, 1945 for O.S.S. officer Peter Dewey, who had been killed in Saigon less than a week before, Knutson suggested the shot that killed Dewey[18]

> may, in a sense, be another shot 'heard round the world' in awakening the American people to the necessity of deciding how far we as a Nation are going to support with military forces the colonial policies of other nations. If the death of valiant Peter Dewey....may result in

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18 Congressional Record, Vol. 91, 9156.

saving the lives of many other American boys, his sacrifice may not have been in vain.

Knutson's statement touched on the evolving and somewhat ambiguous nature of United States Asian policy in the weeks following the surrender of Japan. The uncertainty and frustrations of Ambassador Patrick Hurley and General Albert Wedemeyer in China regarding their mission, the warnings and suggestions from Major Archimedes Patti and Peter Dewey regarding the role of the United States in Indochina, and the suggestion by Representative Knutson, among others, that the United States needed to confront the issue of support for "the colonial policies of other nations," certainly reflected this. An increasing number of American citizens, far removed from the areas that would be affected by this policy, yet keenly interested nonetheless, also questioned to varying degrees and from varying viewpoints, a policy they perceived to be at variance with the spirit, if not the letter, of the Atlantic Charter, or was otherwise contrary to American interests.

The Truman Administration finally acted, in October, to publicly clarify its foreign policy, and to specifically define its policy regarding Indochina. In an address before the Foreign Policy Association in New York

on October 20, John Carter Vincent, Director of the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs Office, reiterated what de Gaulle had been told in August. "With regard to the situation in Indochina," Vincent said, "this government does not question French sovereignty in that area." Vincent was careful to add that it was not the intention of the United States Government, however, to "assist or participate in forceful measures for the imposition of control by territorial sovereigns..."[19]

Truman, in what is generally regarded as his first major foreign policy speech, told a large audience in New York City's Central Park a week later that his government would oppose the recognition of "any government imposed

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19 U.S. Department of State Bulletin, XIII (October 21, 1945), 646. This speech is viewed by some historians as perhaps the clearest sign that, as one put it, "President Roosevelt had lost his fight to prevent the French from reestablishing their imperial position in Vietnam." It also reflects--for stating it was United States policy to "encourage and facilitate the reestablishment of American business in China--American liberal interest in perpetuating the "open door"--or what F. Gorden Leven (and Andrew J. Rotter in The Path to Vietnam) termed "liberal capitalism." For the above assessment of Carter's speech, and pertinent extracts, See Williams, et al., American in Vietnam, 38-39. Rep. Mike Mansfield restated and placed the "open door" philosophy in its cold war context in 1947 when he declared in Congress that "Our policy in China is one based on national welfare. We want expanding opportunities for trade, we want to prevent China from becoming a satellite of Russia, and we want to see China become the bastion for peace in the Far East," CR, February 2, 1947, 767,

upon any nation by the force of any foreign power," and that the United States would support "all peoples who are prepared for self-government" to "choose their own form of government....without interference from any foreign power."[20] Truman's words did not apply, apparently, to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), which had declared its independence from France the previous month.[21] And some observers soon discerned a distinct gap between the rhetoric of "no assistance" for the French, and the reality.

At the moment Truman was speaking in New York about the self-determination of peoples, American troopships, crewed by American merchant seamen, were already enroute to France to begin loading French troops for Indochina. By late December as many as 18,000 soldiers--perhaps 35 percent of all French troops in Vietnam by the

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20 The New York Times, October 27, 1945, 33.

21 Ho Chi Minh sent a number of communications to the Truman Adminmistration in the closing months of 1945, none of which were answered. See, for example, Ho Chi Minh's letter to Byrnes, October 22, 1945, in which he makes a number of references to the Atlantic Charter, and Ho Chi Minh to Byrnes, November 1, 1945, U.S.-Vietnam Relations [hereafter cited as The Pentagon Papers], Book I, I.A.C., 80-81, 90. Patti refers to another communication, a letter from Ho that was given to Col. Stephen L. Nordlinger who headed a U.S. Army unit whose mission was to assist Allied POWs in Hanoi (G-5, CAMG, see note 5, above). The letter was addressed to Secretary of state Byrnes and requested recognition of the DRV. According to Patti, "The State Department took an icy view of Nordlinger's acting as a channel of communications for an unrecognized 'government' and promptly filed the message 'without further action'." Patti, Why Vietnam?, 358, 567.

end of 1945--had arrived in American transports.[22] This represented a significant contribution by the United States to the "imposition of control" by France in Vietnam, contrary to public policy statements, and even communications transmitted through official diplomatic channels.[23]

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22 Very few secondary sources mention, even is passing, the American troopship movement to Vietnam in 1945. One exception is the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars' The Indochina Story (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), 23. See also George McT Kahin, Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 8, 435 (n. 14); Patti, 380. The only detailed account of the operation to date is my own: "Sailing into War: The American Troopship Movement to Vietnam in 1945" and was presented at the Mid-South Sociological Association Convention, Birmingham, AL in 1983. The estimates of troops carried are also my own, based on the approximate number of ships determined to have been involved in the operation--between seven and 12--and the average number of troops carried by a Victory-class troopship--between 1,500 and 2,000. Estimates of French troops in Vietnam by the end of December 1945, found in a number of sources, are usually put at 50,000.

23 It could be argued that the troopship movement to Vietnam was simply part of the wartime agreement between the U.S. and Britain, then still in affect, to share vessels for troop movements in the Atlantic and Pacific. According to the London Agreement of August 5, 1944 for Intergovernmental Shipping Control, the Agreement was to remain in effect "for a period not extending beyond six months after the general suspension of hostilities in Europe or the Far East, whichever may be later [my emphasis]." Among other items agreed upon, the U.S. and Britain, the latter of which was later given responsibility at Potsdam for administering the disarmament and repatriation of Japanese in Indochina, declared that they accepted "as a common responsibility the provision of shipping for all military and other tasks out of the completion of the war in Europe and the Far East and for the supplying of all the liberated areas as well as the United Nations

The first of the American troopships involved in the operation was the S.S. Stamford Victory, which departed Boston for Marseilles on October 11, more than a week before Vincent's speech to the Foreign Policy Association. The vessel arrived on or about October 21, to the surprise of crewmembers who assumed the destination, as on the previous voyage, would be Le Harve, and that the troops coming aboard would be American, not French troops bound for Vietnam.[24] "I don't think we really learned what we were going to do," recalled one navigation officer on the ship," until we got to Marseilles."[25] Another seaman, arriving on a ship after the Stamford Victory, recalled that "Everybody thought we were going to France and back; we knew it was just going to be a three-week trip. But they lied to us."[26]

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generally and territories under their authority." [my emphasis] See Robert Earle Anderson, The Merchant Marine and World Frontiers (New York: Cornell Maritime Press, 1945), 202-205. It could also be argued, however, that this movement of French troops would never have been allowed, in any case, had Roosevelt not died in office. In all probability, Truman, Vincent--and possibly Byrnes--were not even aware of the operation until it was at least underway, since it constituted a logistical matter for the administrators of the War Shipping Administration.

24 The arrival of the Stamford Victory in Boston on her previous voyage, with some 1,934 returning American troops, was reported in the Boston Herald, October 8, 1945. These troops were embarked in Le Harve.

25 Telephone interview with David R. Boylan, August 27, 1983.

26 Telephone interview with Henry Dooley, January 21, 1982.

Some 2,000 French troops, described as "seasoned veterans with career officers," boarded the Stamford Victory[27] in Marseilles. The ship departed on or about October 25, making one brief stop in Algiers--for barrels of wine--before proceeding to Suez. It was while enroute to Suez that Truman made his foreign policy speech in New York.

The crewmembers of the Stamford Victory were among the few Americans to witness the peculiar sight of fully armed Japanese soldiers, several weeks after V-J Day, being employed by the British in Vietnam. As the ship's Third Officer described it years later,[28]

> We docked [in Saigon] sometime in November [on or about the 16th]. As we tied up at the dock I was surprised to see Japanese soldiers in 3 towers about 25 ft. high with mounted machine guns. As the French band assembled on the [ship's] no. 3 hatch, 2 Jap soldiers in full uniform stood at the bottom of the gangway with fixed bayonets. I was one of the first ashore, and they snapped to attention as we left the ship.

The use of Japanese troops by the British in Vietnam underscores the extent to which, and how rapidly, the Allied powers yielded to expediency in the weeks and months following the end of World War II.[29] What was expedi-

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27 Letter from David R. Boylan, March 29, 1980.

28 Ibid.

29 For perhaps the most complete account of the British role in Vietnam in 1945, and the use of Japanese troops, see George Rosie, The British in Vietnam: How the Twenty-Five Year War Began (London: Panther, 1970); See also Daniel Bart Valentine, "The British Facilitation of

ent was the implementation of policy, using whatever means and resources were available. The French were committed to returning to Vietnam, and the British were just as committed to paving the way for the French return. The policy of the United States was to assist her allies, while attempting to minimize the visibilbility of its own involvement in fostering colonialism.[30] That the United States was involved, as the troopship movement and subsequent events revealed, was clear. It was, simply put, a question of shifting priorities on the part of the American government. The United States was willing to help France, with a quid quo pro (cooperation in Europe), and some form of limited self-government in Indochina.

The use of Japanese troops to put down initial manifestations of colonial revolt--often reported as acts of "terrorism" by the American mainstream press--as the British did in Vietnam and elsewhere, went against the grain of even the most moderate American critics, who regarded

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the French Re-entry Into Vietnam" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1974). See also Kahin, Intervention, 17-18, 439-40, n. 41.

30 An example of American willingness to see colonial powers supplied in Southeast Asia during this period, while minimizing the visibility of the United States role, was the announcement on October 24, 1945 by Secretary of State Byrnes that the U.S. had requested the British and Dutch to remove American insignia from the equipment they were using. See Lawrence S. Finkelstein. American Policy in Southeast Asia (New York: American Institute of Pacific Relations, 1951; The New York Times, October 25, 1945.

it as a sell-out to American, if not Allied, principles for which World War II had ostensibly been fought. "If there is anything that makes my blood boil," even General Douglas MacArthur was moved to observe, "it is to see our allies in Indochina and Java deploying Japanese troops to reconquer these little people we promised to liberate. It is the most ignoble kind of betrayal."[31]

Following the Stamford Victory to Vietnam in November and December 1945 were the American troopships Pachaug Victory, Winchester Victory, Kings Point Victory, Taos Victory, Georgetown Victory and Amherst Victory, with as many as five additional American troopships participating in the operation.[32] The merchant mariners who crewed these

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31 Patti, Why Vietnam?, 325.

32 Regarding the numbers of American ships involved in the operation, Richard D. Gatewood, American Vice Consul at Ceylon, reported on November 27, 1945 that eight American ships carrying French troops had arrived in Vietnam by that date (Gatewood to Byrnes, December 5, 1945, File No. 711.90/12-545, RG 59). Another report, printed in the December 15, 1945 issue of The Militant, described how "travelers arriving by air from Singapore [to Batavia]....reported that eight American Victory Ships docked at Saigon, Indo-China....and each unloaded 2,000 French troops equipped with American arms..." An indication that there may have been even more ships involved in the operation appears in a November 13, 1945 communication between J. W. Joyce, War Shipping Administration District Auditor for the United Kingdom and Continental Europe, and J. M. Quinn, the WSA's Comptroller, in which Joyce reports that the Stamford Victory and Pachaug Victory had been handled in Port Said by the English Coaling Co., Ltd. on November 4, "with approximately ten more ships in sight." (U.S. Maritime Commission, Mail and Files Section, File No. 901-14892, subject: Pachaug Victory." Thus, there may

vessels were among the first Americans to see the transition of power taking place in Vietnam in the weeks and months following World War II, and they were witness not only to the use of Japanese troops by the British, but to the reactions of the Vietnamese themselves to the "ignoble betrayal" in which even the Americans seemed to be participating. As one seaman observed, the Vietnamese "all spoke to us of their hatred of the French and their wonderment at the Americans [for] bringing the French invaders back."[34]

American merchant seamen bore witness to the unfolding events in Vietnam in the closing months of 1945, and many of them neither liked what they saw, nor quietly accepted their unexpected roles in the French trooplift. While there is no indication that crewmembers of the Stamford Victory had anything to say about their roles in the operation, such was not the case with at least five of the vessels that converged on Saigon in late November following the Stamford Victory's departure.

Pachaug Victory and Taos Victory sailed from the United States within a week of the Stamford Victory, and were reported leaving Marseilles on October 31. Each car-

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well have been eight ships involved, and as many as twelve.

34 Letter from Henry Dooley, December 10, 1981.

ried more than 1,000 French troops.[35] Two days after departing Marseilles the crew of the Pachaug Victory decided something had to be done to protest the very operation in which they were engaged. On November 2, while still enroute to Suez, a memorandum was drawn up for posting to the National Maritime Union, of which most of the ship's unlicensed personnel (non-officers) were members. A copy was also prepared, and was later sent, presumably from Suez, to the War Shipping Administration in Washington, D.C.[36] It read, in part:

> At this time, while servicemen are waiting in all foreign countries to be transported to the United States for a discharge....we the 88 members of the troopship S.S. Pachaug Victory protest the use of American ships to transport foreign troops and war equipment (guns and ammunition, etc.).

As members of the National Maritime Union, which distinguished itself as one of the more progressive American maritime labor organizations of the period, many of the Pachaug Victory's crewmembers fully supported the cause of colonial peoples seeking to exercise self-determination.[37] Not surprisingly, many of them reacted

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35 PM Daily (New York), November 12, 1945, 20.

36 Memorandum, "The 88 Personnal [sic] of the Troopship S.S. PACHAUG VICTORY" to National Maritime Union, November 2, 1945, U.S. Maritime Commission, Mail and Files Section, File No. 901-14892, "Pachaug Victory."

37 The National Maritime Union, affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, was formed in the

with indignation and anger at finding themselves being cast, in affect, as instruments of pro-colonial policy aboard ships carrying French troops to Indochina.

Seamen aboard another ship, Winchester Victory, also found a means to protest the operation while still enroute to Vietnam. At a meeting held aboard ship on November 21 a report was presented by an elected committee regarding action already taken to protest the troopship movement. The committee reported that cablegrams had been sent to both President Truman and Senator Robert Wagner of New York which read:

> We, the unlicensed personel of the SS Winchester Victory, vigorously protest the use of this and other American vessels for carrying foreign combat troops to foreign soil for the purpose of engaging in hostilities to further the imperialist policies of foreign governments when there are American soldiers waiting to come

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late 1930s as a response to more conservative maritime organizations then in existence. It had a reputation for being "progressive" in the sense that it encouraged racial integration among its members, and supported progressive-social programs. Many of its members, ardent anti-fascists, had fought in Spain, in 1936 and 1937 with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The NMU would go through a major transformation in the late 1940s, and many of its members--most of whom had served throughout World War II--would be blacklisted from employment as merchant seamen. For background on the NMU during this period, see, for example, Murray Kempton, Part of Our Time: Some Monuments and Ruins of the Thirties (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955); Claire Neikind, "Joe Curran: Seaman in Deep Water," The Reporter, vol. 2, no. 7 (March 28, 1950), 27-30. See also David Caute, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 235-236.

> home. Request immediate congressional investigation of this matter.

The ship's committee also reported that an airmail registered letter had been sent to Admiral Emory Land of the War Shipping Administration in Washington, D.C.[38]

Some days later, presumably in the last week of November 1945, the committees from four American troopships--Winchester Victory, Taos Victory, Georgetown Victory and Kings Point Victory--gathered in Saigon to draw up a joint resolution protesting the operation. According to minutes kept by the recording secretary of the Winchester Victory, the resolution "condemned the policy of the U.S. Government in chartering ships, flying the American flag" to transport troops "in order to subjugate the native population" of Vietnam.[39]

Later, on December 1, the committee from the Winchester Victory composed a letter in Singapore which it addressed "to various senators and congressman [sic]." "At this writing," it stated,

> our ship, along with other American-owned and manned ships, are laying at anchor in Singapore, preparatory to being assigned to a similar mission by the British government; in this instance, the carrying of more foreign combat

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38 "Five Crews Protest U.S. Aid Against Indo-China," The NMU Pilot, February 15, 1946. See also, "Foreign Troops Aboard, Winchester Men Protest," Ibid., February 8, 1946.

39 Ibid.

> troops to Batavia, Netherlands East Indies, where the British are supporting the Dutch government in their imperialist policy of ruthlessly supprssing the native populations of these countries.

The letter concluded with an observation concerning the impact of the troopship movement on the reputation of the United States in Southeast Asia, a common theme among those concerned with the direction of United States policy towards the area following World War II.[40] "The native populations,"[41] the letter noted,

> are under the impression that our government is sponsoring these punitive campaigns; the faith and prestige that the U.S. has enjoyed in this part of the world during the Japanese occupation has suffered tremendous and irreparable loss.

At least one additional American troopship has been positively identified as having participated in the Vietnam operation, the S.S. Amherst Victory. Spotted in Marseilles on November 11, some two weeks after the Stam-

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40 That the impact of U.S. involvement in the troopship movement was perceived as negative to American prestige in Southeast Asia was the opinion of U.S. intelligence officers, as well as those directly involved in the operation. Arthur Hale, who visited Hanoi for two weeks in October 1945, and who later interviewed American officers who had returned from Indochina, submitted a 20-page report in December 1945 in which he concluded that "Incidents such as the recent shipment of French troops to Saigon in American vessels must have impaired considerably the great prestige in the eyes of the Annamites we enjoyed at the cessation of hostilities with Japan." Arthur Hale to Mr. Holland, Philip E. Gallagher Papers, U.S. Army, Department of Military History, Washington, D.C., 20.

41 NMU Pilot, February 15, 1946.

ford Victory, the Amherst Victory probably arrived in Saigon during the first week of December, after the meeting of the other ships' committees. While there is no indication that her crew also protested the operation, her presence in Marseilles, where she reportedly loaded 1,900 French troops, prompted at least one irate American soldier who observed her there to register his own protest. "We have read many explanations for the lack of shipping," the soldier wrote to Stars and Stripes, "but today we saw an incident [sailing of Amherst Victory with French troops] that demands some explanation....This is the first trip for this ship since being converted for troop transport. It is still under our control. How many more ships are being deployed from deployment?"[42]

Word of the American troopship movement to Vietnam began filtering back to the United States in November, perhaps as a result of the letter writing campaign initiated

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42 Lt. S.K., Stars and Stripes (West Europe Edition), November 22, 1945 as quoted in The Militant, December 8, 1945, 3. This letter was one indication of growing discontent among American soldiers who objected to the use of troopships for other purposes, while they waited for transportation back to the States. Their impatience at the delays, coupled with philosophical objections to U.S. assistance for colonial powers, after years of fighting for the principles embodied in the Atlantic Charter, gave rise to demonstrations in both Europe and Southeast Asia in late 1945 and early 1946. One demonstration in the Philippines reportedly drew some 3,000 disgruntled GIs. See The Militant, January 12, 1946, 3; The Militant, January 19, 1946, 3; The Militant, January 26, 1946, 3; UE

by the seamen involved in the operation. Though there are no indications that the story was ever picked up by the main stream press, one liberal-left newspaper in New York, PM Daily, ran a brief article in its November 12 issue, before the first of the troopships had even arrived in Saigon. With a Marseilles dateline, PM noted that "American troop transports are ferrying French colonial troops to French Indo-China" while "GI veterans....are impatiently awaiting transportation back to the States."[43]

Additional, if limited, coverage of the troopship movement also appeared in the NMU Pilot, the monthly publication of the National Maritime Union, and The Militant of the Socialist Workers Party. One article in the Pilot was accompanied by a cartoon showing a merchant ship bearing the words "American shipping" on its side, and flying a skull and crossbones flag with the word "imperialism" emblazened upon it.[44] The Militant, giving credit to PM for bringing the troopship movement to its attention, observed that "the reality of the Atlantic Charter" was "visible in the blood-soaked soil of the colonial lands."[45]

While word of the troopship movement received lit-

News, December 15, 1945, 2; UE News, November 10, 1945, 3.

43 PM Daily, November 12, 1945, 20.

44 The cartoon appeared in the February 8, 1946 issue of The NMU Pilot. Other articles appeared in the January 4, 1946 and February 15, 1946 issues.

45 The Militant, December 15, 1945, 4.

tle attention in the United States, and seemed confined to intelligence reports, a few letters of protest, and articles in the liberal-left and far-left press, criticism of the postwar drift of United States Asian policy in general, of which the operation was but one of many manifestations, seemed to escalate and broaden in the closing months of 1945. Clearly, United States support for the reestablishment of colonialism in Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and elsewhere was of major concern, and stimulated the wrath of right-wing, moderate, and left-wing critics alike, many of whom used the Atlantic Charter as a frame of reference. And the worsening situation in China, to which the United States was committing troopships, planes, vast quantities of military supplies, and even troops on behalf of the Chiang Kai-shek regime, also became an increasingly dominant issue and focus of criticism.[46] Indeed, while American support for the French in

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46 Immediately following the Japanese surrender, the United States became involved in airlifting and moving by sea some 400,000 to 500,000 Nationalist Chinese troops to positions in East and North China, the result, as Michael Schaller has described it, of "Hurley's and Wedemeyer's constant urging that Washington cooperate with the KMT in postwar action against Yenan..." This followed Truman's General Order Number One, on August 15, which designated, much to the chagrin of the Chinese Communist leadership, Chiang Kai-shek as the only authority permitted to accept the surrender of Japanese in China. The Commencement of the KMT trooplift was followed, in late September, by the landing of more than 50,000 U.S. Marines at Tientsin. Some of these troops, standing guard duty and fight-

Indochina continued to draw attention and criticism, it became overshadowed by, and often expressed through, the growing preoccupation with United States ivolvement in the Chinese civil war.[47]

Critical reaction to United States Asian policy between October and December 1945 was varied, both in terms of perspective and the format and manner in which it was expressed. It was visible among merchant seamen involved in transporting French troops to Vietnam, and among American soldiers whose passage back to the United States was delayed by what many of them considered an unnecessary and even immoral diversion of ships for the reimposition of colonialism in Southeast Asia.[48] It was visible,

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ing alongside re-armed Japanese troops, in some cases, actually clashed with units of the Eighth Route Army near Tsingtao and elsewhere, much to the dismay of critics in the United States, as well as within the ranks of soldiers stationed in China. See Michael Schaller, The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 264-283; The China White Paper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967) (Originally issued as United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949, DOS Publication 3573, Far Eastern Series 30, August 1949), Chapter VII, "The Military Picture, 1945-1949", 311-315. U.S.M.C. Branch, United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949 (Washington: USGPO, 1960).

47 This was especially true after 1945, and will be addressed more fully in Chapter Four.

48 One telling exmple of GI concern not only with delays, but with the policy that caused them, was a letter sent by 120 enlisted men of Company B, 779th Tank Battalion from Manila to Representative John B. Sullivan of Missouri in December 1945. "If we're here for intervention in China or Java," the letter said, "that's against what we fought for. If it's just another SNAFU, then let's get

as well, on the editorial pages of not only left-wing publications with limited circulations, but of more moderate mainstream newspapers of Middle America as well. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, a respected mainstream daily serves as one example of many newspapers that closely followed the formulation and implementation of Truman Administration foreign and Asian policy during this period.

Among the syndicated columnists whose commentary was regularly featured in the Post-Dispatch, Walter Lippmann criticised the Truman Administration for using "simple formulas for dealing with extremely complicated situations" and for falsely believing American power could necessarily make up for the deficiencies of America's allies with colonial interests. "Neither in dealing with Russians nor with the great masses of the dependent peoples of Southern Asia has that been a workable formula.... It causes us to meddle in matters of which we cannot deal with the consequences."[49]

Post-Dispatch editorial writers and cartoonists focused with sharp criticism on U.S. involvement in China,

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going!" "Congress Feels GI Wrath Over Transportation Delay", UE News, December 15, 1945, 2. See also Sgt. Sam C. McKay, Jr. to Sen. Tom Connally, November 1945, cited in Kenneth Chern, "Prelude to Cold War: The United States Senate and the Abortive China Debate, 1945," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1974), 238; Schaller, 273-74.

49 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 1, 1945; November 12, 1945.

as well as Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies, throughout the closing months of 1945. A frequent theme of articles and editorials alike was the impact of United States policy not only on the colonial peoples of Southeast Asia, but also on the rapidly waning prestige of the United States in the region.[50] The closing months of 1945 were considered critical in determining what direction United States policy, viewed by many as vague, passive or worse, actively supportive of colonialism, would take. While many policy critics believed the crucial decisions on United States policy had already been made, perhaps months before, others--including Post-Disptach editorial writers and cartoonists--portrayed Uncle Sam as standing at an important crossroads, with paths leading in different yet equally dangerous directions. "Watch your step, Uncle" read the caption of one cartoon as a crossroads sign indicated the way to either "Chinese Civil War" or "imperialism" and warned of "booby traps ahead!"[51]

United States policy was criticized, as well, for being inconsistent, and hypocritical. One Post-Dispatch editorial writer, commenting on a speech by Secretary of

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50 See, for example, A. T. Steele, "Allies Are Fast Losing the Peace in Southern Asia and Prestige of United States is in Danger", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 9, 1945, 1F.

51 Ibid., November 26, 1945, 2C.

State Byrnes, for example, pointed out the failure of the United States "to demand democracy for India, Java, Indo-China, and China itself at the same time we are insisting upon it in the Balkans."[52]

A further theme of the policy opposition in the closing months of 1945, and one that is repeated over and over in the Post-Dispatch, as elsewhere, is the betrayal of the philosophy and policies of Franklin Roosevelt, particularly that which was embodied in the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. After a bombing raid by the British in Java, a Post-Dispatch cartoon depicted the Four Freedoms as four bombs falling from the sky over Java. And Leland Stowe, in an article re-printed in the Post-Dispatch, asked,[54]

> Do you like to watch fires? So, apparently, does Washington.
>
> In Indo-China, the Annamites want at least a couple of the Four Freedoms, and the French smack

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52 Ibid., Editorial, "Mr. Byrne's Speech," November 2, 1945, 2C. The hypocrisy theme appears again, for example, in "The Bombing of Soerabaja," November 12, 1945, 2B. On the issue of U.S. intervention in the Chinese Civil War, The Post-Dispatch was clear in its opposition. See, for example, "Our Chinese Civil War?," November 1, 1945, 2C; "Why Not Get Out of China Now?," November 7, 1945, 2C; "An Ugly Episode in China," December 13, 1945, 2C.

53 Ibid. November 14, 1945, 2C. This cartoon later accompanied a Pearl Buck article highly critical of U.S. Asian policy, "American Imperialism in the Making," which appeared in the December 1945 issue of Ammunition, monthly publication of the United Auto Workers.

54 Leland Stowe, "Do We Mean The Four Freedoms?", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 19, 1945, 2C.

> them down with American-made tanks.
> We tell the world about the Four Freedoms. Then, when people most concerned take our noble declarations seriously, America stands on the sidelines and watches the fireworks. Is this the way to promote democracy?

Other articles and cartoons further underscored the extent to which Post-Dispatch writers and artists, like others throughout the United States, continued to regard the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter as one measure of United States Asian Policy in late 1945, as well as in the years to come.[55]

The sentiments expressed by editorial writers and columnists for such newspapers as the Post-Dispatch in St. Louis, and other cities is but one indication of disapproval and opposition to the Asian policy of the Truman Administration in the closing months of 1945. The decisions to provide logistical and material support--even if indirectly--to France, Britain and the Dutch; to intervene in the Chinese Civil War with troops as well as logistical and material support; and the decision, in effect, to maintain the status quo ante bellum in the Southeast Asia rather than take a firm and leading stand for self-deter-

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55 Other examples from the Post-Dispatch include "In the United Nations' Closet" (cartoon by Daniel Fitzpatrick), December 11, 1945, 2C; Steele, "Allies Are Fast Losing the Peace in Southern Asia and Prestige of United States Is in Danger," December 9, 1945, 1F.

mination, was contrary to what many Americans believed the role of the United States should to be in the world.

Organized labor, though by no means united in condemning Truman Administration policy in Asia, made a significant contribution to the chorus of dissent in November and December 1945. Joseph Curran, President of the National Maritime Union, for example, took particular exception to the use of American ships, crewed by many members of the NMU itself, in shuttling British and Dutch troops to, among other things, "help suppress people who are fighting for liberty in Indonesia."[56] The United Electrical Workers (UE) charged the Truman Administration with betraying the policies of Franklin Roosevelt, saying the intervention in China was "directly contrary to President Roosevelt's policy and will only result in making us hated throughout all of the Asiatic continent by all democratic, freedom-loving peoples."[57] And one local of the Electrical Workers, District 6 in Pittsburgh, called American assistance for the Dutch in Indonesia a "perversion of the causes for which the war was fought," and urged the Truman Administration to bring American soldiers home from the Far East "instead of using them to make war on peoples in Asia who helped us

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56 "Union Seamen Give Lowdown on Ship Snafu," UE News, November 10, 1945, 8.

57 Clifford McAvoy, "FDR Foreign Policy Betrayed," UE News, December 8, 1945, 8.

helped us win and who are now seeking democracy and independence."[58] Yet another labor organization, The United Auto Workers, to cite but one more example, showed where its sympathies lay when it reprinted Pearl Buck's strongly worded article from Asia and the Americas, "American Imperialism in the Making", in its own monthly publication, Ammunition.[59]

That opposition to U.S. Asian policy took a variety of forms in late 1945 was also revealed in the resignation of Maj. General Patrick Hurley, the U.S. Ambassador to China, on November 27.[60] Hurley clearly stood apart from many other critics, especially in his strong advocasy of Chiang Kai-shek and in his early reliance on the tactics of anti-communism; his resignation, however, illustrates not only a form of conservative opposition to the Truman Administration, but also the extent to which critics throughout the political spectrum identified with the poli-

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58 "Bring Soldiers Back, Don't Make Them Fight Asiatic Allies--District 6," UE News, November 10, 1945, 3.

59 Ammunition, December 1945, 9-10; Asia and the Americas, October 1945, 365-368 (see chapter 2, above).

60 Before being appointed Ambassador to China in January 1944, Hurley had served as Under Secretary of War, and Secretary of War, from 1929 to 1933. He was later appointed by Roosevelt to diplomatic positions in New Zealand and the Middle East, and to China in 1944 to assist, among other things, with the possible formation of a coalition government. See Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977), 154.

cies of Franklin Roosevelt, or what they perceived those policies to have been.[61]

Hurley argued, on the one hand, that the "astonishing feature"[62] of U.S. policy was the discrepancy

> between our announced policies and our conduct of international relations. For instance, we began the war with the principles of the Atlantic Charter and democracy as our goal....we finished the war in the East furnishing lend-lease supplies and using all our reputation to undermine democrasy and bolster imperialism.

Yet, he steadfastly supported the regime of Chiang Kai-shek, despite persuasive evidence of that regime's undemocratic nature and its lack of popular support. Hurley's own critics, identifying the irony and hypocrisy of his logic, blamed him for standing in the way of democracy in China, because of his ardent advocacy of Chiang, for prolonging the process of unification in China, and for promoting the cause of imperialism in Asia, despite his rhetoric. His resignation statement was easily dismissed by some, greeted with derision by others, and described as "misleading,"[63] at best, by still others. It did, in any

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61 Hurley's reasons for resigning are described in Schaller, 275-277; Yergin, 154-155.

62 "The Ambassador to China to President Truman," Annex No. 50, DOS, United States Relations with China (Washington: USGPO, 1949), 581-584; Edward R. Drachman, United States Policy Toward Vietnam, 1940-1945 (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970), 129-130.

63 See, for example, "Gen. Hurley's Misleading Statement," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 28, 1945,

case, focus increased attention on the policies of the Truman Administration in Asia.

It was Hurley's criticism of the U.S. Department of State, and his reference to "a considerable section" of the Department "endeavoring to support Communism generally as well as specifically in China,"[64] that contributed so tellingly to the ideological struggles that were to come within the ranks of the policy opposition itself in the coming months and years.[65] As Barbara Tuchman has described it,

> His accusation captured the spirit of the time. Since the dissolution of wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, innate fear and hate of Communism reasserted itself in America. On that dark yeast, grudge, ambition and vindictiveness could feed, and demagogues grow fat. Hurley opened the journey toward the tawdry reign of terror soon to be imposed with such astonishing ease by Senator Joe McCarthy. The time for hysterics had arrived.

The hysterics of anti-communism may have been responsible, at least in part, for Senate hearings on the

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2C; "Hurley's Blast and the China Crisis", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 2, 1945, 2F; Clifford McAvoy, "FDR Foreign Policy Betrayed", UE News, December 8, 1945, 8; "Hurley's Resignation" (editorial), The Militant, December 8, 1945, 4.

64 Barbara W. Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1971), 523-24. Among those later identified as being among the "section" of Communist supporters in State were George Atcheson, John Service and John Paton Davies. See Davies, Dragon By the Tail, 418-19.

65 Ibid., 526.

China issue in December, and for their demise not long after they had begun. Initiated by Senator Styles Bridges (R-NH), and held before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the hearings featured, among others, recently-resigned Ambassador Hurley as a leading witness for the pro-interventionists, which included Bridges himself. Though the hearings were never carried through to completion, in part because the appointment of General George Marshall on December 15 as Truman's personal representative to China temporarilly defused the debate, it allowed some senators, particularly those on the democatic side of the aisle, an opportunity to voice their reservations about United States China policy. Among those who argued against the use of American military personnel in China were Senators Tom Connally, Chairman of the Committee, and Mike Mansfield (D-MT). Connally himself described the Chiang Kai-shek regime as "corrupt and reactionary."[66] Other senators joined Connally and Mansfield in arguing against military intervention in China, though the hearings were terminated prematurely, and a final report was

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66 Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I, 1945-1961 (Washington: USGPO, 1984), 23.

67 They probably included Senator Francis J. Myers, who was also opposed to the use of American troops in China. See UE News, November 17, 1945, 5.

never issued by the Committee.[68]

The House of Representatives also debated the China issue, and a resolution was introduced by Representatives Hugh De Lacy, John M. Coffee and Charles R. Savage, of Washington, and Helen Gahagan Douglas, Ned R. Nealy and Ellis E. Patterson, of California, demanding that the Truman Administration "order forthwith the recall of all United States troops, transports and supplies from China."[69]

Early Forms of Public Protest

Concerns about United States intervention in the Chinese Civil War, and in Indochina, surfaced in no less an arena than New York City's Madison Square Garden in early December, at a rally sponsored by the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions (ICCASP), a liberal-left organization formed in 1944 as an

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68 It has been suggested that, aside from the appointment of Marshall, the hearings were ended to avoid making them a partisan issue, and out of concern for the Democrats in the 1946 election. See U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, 24; Kenneth Chern, "Prelude to Cold War: The United States Senate and the Abortive China Debate, 1945" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1974); "Investigation of the Situation in the Far East," (unpublished hearing transcript) Papers of the Committee on Foreign Relations, National Archives, RG 48.; Kenneth S. Chern, "Politics of American China Policy, 1945: Roots of the Cold War in Asia," Political Science Quarterly, 91 (Winter 1976-77), 631-645.

69 UE News, December 8, 1945, 8.

outgrowth of the New Deal Coalition to re-elect President Roosevelt.[70] Called by the ICCASP primarilly to address the issue of atomic energy and its postwar uses, the rally was attended by a capacity crowd of some 19,000 people who listened to speeches by Henry A. Wallace, Julian Huxley, Harold Urey, Hellen Keller, Senator Charles W. Toby, Fredric March, Richard Frankensteen, and others. In a departure from the atomic energy theme, however, Col. Evans Carlson, an ICCASP Vice Chairman and Marine Corps hero who had travelled extensively in and written about China, rose to deliver a speech about United States China policy.[71]

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70 Executive Chairman of the ICCASP at this time was Harold L. Ickes, a New Dealer who had served as Secretary of the Interior in the Roosevelt Administration. Other members of the Committee's executive board included Jo Davidson, Chairman, Frederick March, Treasurer, and Herman Shumlin, Secretary. The Committee's Vice Chairmen included Col. Evans Carlson, Norman Corwin, Fiorello La Guardia, Archi- bald MacLeish, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Paul Robeson, Harlow Shapley and Frank Sinatra. Members of the Committee's Board of Directors included Howard Fast, Leonard Bernstein, Mos Hart, Lillian Hellman, John Hersey, Langston Hughes, Walter Huston, Bill Mauldin, Quentin Reynolds, James Roosevelt and Orson Welles. See The Independent, February 13, 1946, Tamiment Library, New York University. For additional information on the ICCASP see James Boylan, The New Deal Coalition and the Election of 1945 (New York: Garland, 1981), 76-80.

71 Carlson had served with General Smedley Butler in China in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Later, as Assistant Naval Attache in China, he supplied Roosevelt with information about military developments there, particularly the effectiveness of the Chinese Communist forces against the Japanese. He gained public fame fighting the Japanese in his own right during World War II, as leader of a battalion that became known as "Carlson's Raiders." See Tuchman, Stilwell, 175-176. Among Carlson's

The presence of American troops in China was "inimical to the interests of the Chinese people," Carlson said, and would long be remembered by the Chinese people as having aided "in preventing the expression of their will to improve their welfare."[72] His remarks were later followed by a series of resolutions, introduced by Orson Welles at the rally's conclusion, dealing with United States Asian policy. Welles rose to denounce the Truman Administration "for departing from the Roosevelt foreign policy." And the resolutions, which passed unanimously, called for withdrawal of United States troops from China, and deplored "the use of American lend-lease material [sic] in Java and Indo-China."[73]

The ICCASP's Madison Square Garden rally, while not exactly a sign of massive opposition to United States Asian policy in 1945, must be recognized as one of many indications of deep-seated discontent with a policy that

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published works are The Chinese Army (New York: American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), and Twin Stars of China (New York: Dodd Mead, 1940). See also Edgar Snow's, People on Our Side (New York: Random House, 1944), 288, which was dedicated to Carlson.

72 The New York Times, December 5, 1945, 8. Carlson's keen interest in the Asia, and concern about the direction U.S. policy was taking in the area, was reflected in his involvement with the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy (CDFEP) which he helped establish in late 1945. The CDFEP, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, was active until the early 1950s.

73 Ibid.

many saw as a departure from--a "betrayal" of--the policy of Franklin Roosevelt. Furthermore, the very existence of the ICCASP, a fairly diverse and well organized national organization with a large and growing membership, underscores the potential that still seemed to exist, in late 1945 at least, for a form of moderate-left coalition; one that might have more effectively challenged the Asian policy of the Truman Administration. This was not to be, however, as ideological divisions in the Committee, reflecting growing divisions and fears in American society in general, were to shatter any hopes that existed for a liberal-left coalition in the months and immediate years to come.[74]

There were other signs of discontent, and outright opposition, to United States Asian and Indochina policy in the closing months of 1945. In addition to the numerous articles and editorials that appeared in many of the nation's mainstream and alternative newspapers and journals, the labor press, the somewhat limited debate on the China issue in Congress, the letters and telegrams from irate merchant seamen involved in a distasteful troopship

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74 The demise of the ICCASP in 1946, reflecting the early impact of ideological divisions within the liberal ranks, and on attempts to build a liberal-left coalition against Administration foreign policy, will be detailed in Chapter 4.

operation to Vietnam, and rumblings and grumblings from within the State Department itself, there is no question that many other Americans were disillusioned--if not angry--with the perceived direction of Truman Administration Asian policy. Their frustration and anger was visible in numerous "letters to the editor," and in their own letters and telegrams to President Truman.[75] And, in a development that presaged the later anti-war demonstrations by nearly 20 years, the first organized demonstration against United States involvement in the Vietnam War appeared, as early as November 1945, in New York City.

As was the case with the first antiwar demonstrations in the early 1960s, the New York City protest against United States Asian policy was relatively small, and was organized by the far left, in this case the Social-

75 See, for example, cross-reference sheet summary of telegram, Annetee Green and others (Brooklyn, NY) to President Truman, November 2, 1945, Harry S. Truman Library, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File. The summary sheet says: "The undersigned protest the use of American troops, transport and arms in China. Urge that permission be withdrawn to recruit United States Army Air forces pilots and ground crews by Central Chinese Government. They hold Patrick Hurley responsible for American interference and urge his immediate removal. Protest use of American arms with or without labels in Indo-China. Think that interference in China or Indo-China internal affairs is forbidden in the Yalta and Cairo agreements." See also Telegram, Officers and Members St. James Literary Forum (Cleveland, OH) to Truman, November 13, 1945, Truman Library, Truman PP, Official File. This reads, in part: "We request the President to prevent the further use of American munitions in Java and Indo-China." Another example is

ist Workers Party.[76] The SWP called for a "mass meeting" to take place at the Hotel Diplomat, on West 43 Street, on November 30 to "protest the massacre of colonial peoples of Indonesia, Indo-China and the imperialist intervention in China." According to the SWP, some 350 persons responded to the call. After listening to speeches by SWP National Secretary James P. Cannon and The Militant Editor Farrell Dobbs, a resoluton was adopted that condemned the "use of American tanks, planes, ships and troops....and the intervention of the United States in the internal

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a letter from J.J. Singh, President, India League of America (New York, NY) to Truman, December 14, 1945, Truman Library, Truman PP, Official File.

76 Though miniscule, the Trotskyist SWP was particularly interested in Vietnam during this period due to the presence of Trotskyists there who were challenging, with little success, the Viet Minh Provisional Executive Committee. Its publication, The Militant, has been a useful source of information on Vietnam, and to some extent reaction to Indochina policy--during this period, when there was generally little information coming oput of the area. On the Trotskyists in Vietnam see Patti, Why Vietnam?, 521-524. See also Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, Vol. I (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1967), 315-316. For more on the SWP during this period see Lee Evans, ed., James P. Cannon, Writings and Speeches, 1945-47. The Struggle for Socialism in the 'American Century' (New York: Parthfinder Press, 1977). One of the first demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, though not the first, occurred on May 2, 1964 at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. Coordinated by the newly-formed M2M Movement, some 400 college students, many of them affiliated with the Young Socialist Alliance and the SWP, participated. See Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 19-20.

affairs of China, Indo-China, Indonesia and Korea." The meeting ended with the singing of the "Internationale."[77]

Other larger and louder demonstrations protesting United States Asian and Indochina policy were to follow the SWP's Hotel Diplomat gathering in years to come. Its significance lies, therefore, not in its size, nor, certainly, in the ideological diversity of those who attended, but rather in the fact that it was the first of its kind in a war that, to one degree or another was to involve the United States for some 30 years.[78]

Though it could be argued, perhaps, that United States Asian policy was still "finding itself" in the months following the unexpectedly rapid conclusion of the war on Japan, American actions--and inaction--in response to the reimposition of colonialism in Indochina and elsewhere, as well as the intervention in China, led many critics to conclude the policy, as ambiguous and contradictory as it appeared, had not only found itself, but found itself on the wrong side of popular sentiment in the South-

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77 The Militant, November 17, 1945, 2; December 8, 1945, 1,7.

78 There may have been another anti-colonial "mass meeting," in Chicago, on December 16, 1945, again under the auspices of the SWP. The proposed meeting site was Buckingham Hall on East Van Buren Street, and Charles Jackson, who wrote The Militant's "Negro Struggle" column, was to be the keynote speaker. The announcement was posted in the December 8 issue of The Militant, but there was no follow up story.

Chicago

east Asia. The United States found itself trying to have it both ways, espousing certain noble principles while making sure strategic, commercial and ideological interests were fostered as well. These impulses contributed to making policy appear contradictory and hypocritical, stimulated opposition at home, and undermined United States prestige--greatly enhanced during World War II--among the colonial peoples of Asia. As Lawrence S. Finkelstein expressed it, from the vantage point of 1951, America's[79]

> curious combination of unwillingness to assume responsibility for the reentry of the colonial authorities while maintaining a neutrality based on the legal position of the colonial powers was calculated to avoid offense to either side in the struggles, but of course succeeded only in fostering animosity toward the United States from all sides. The American timidity stood in strange and sharp contrast to the ringing wartime declarations of sympathy for the aspirations of the colonial peoples for independence.

One of the objectives of American policy-makers in late 1945 was to foster at least an illusion of United States neutrality in Asia, though such a claim had become more difficult to maintain in the case of the China, where American troops were being deployed on behalf of the Kuomintang. The removal of American insignia from military equipment in the Dutch East Indies was one indication of

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79 Lawrence S. Finkelstein, American Policy in Southeast Asia (New York: American Institute of Pacific Relations, 1951).

this attempt to appear neutral, as were policy statements insisting the United States, while recognizing French claims in Vietnam, would not assist the French to reestablish hegemony in the region. Indeed, the Truman Administration even offered its assistance to mediate, as a neutral party, in Vietnam, but the French made it clear they did not want that kind of help from the United States.[80]

Despite the gestures and rhetoric of neutrality, however, the reality of United States policy was clearly evident, to many critics, in the use of American troopships to carry colonial occupation forces to Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and in the transfer of vast supplies of surplus military equipment to the colonial powers. Critics of U.S. Far Eastern policy looked at the question of neutrality as an essential yardstick for evaluating U.S. policy in Indochina and elsewhere. And they attacked the Truman Administration not only for behaving in an unneutral manner, but for even attempting to remain passive when circumstances--namely, the reimposition of colonialism in Southeast Asia--demanded a commitment and active involvement by the United States as an anti-colonial force in the

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80 See, for example, John Carter Vincent's speech to the Foreign Policy Association on October 20, 1945, U.S. Department of State Bulletin, XIII (October 21, 1945), 646. For the French response, see The New York Times, October 22, 1945, 2.

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An organization that continually and critically monitored United States Asia policy, and addressed the role of the United States in the Far East during this period, as it did throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, was the American Institute of Pacific Relations (AIPR). One of several National Councils of the Institute of Pacific Relations, which described itself as "an unofficial and nonpartisan organization, founded in 1925 to facilitate the scientific study of the peoples of the Pacific area," the AIPR published a fortnightly magazine, Far Eastern Survey, and sponsored publication of several books, including Lawrence Finkelstein's American Policy in Southeast Asia.[81] It was formed, one longtime research associate remembered, "to fill the gap between newspaper coverage of the Far East and academia" and tended, though theoretically impartial, to have a liberal-left viewpoint.[82]

On the question of American policy and leadership in the Asia immediately following World War II, a front-page editorial in Far Eastern Survey on October 24, 1945 revealed the extent to which many critics had already taken a

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81 See page 144, n. 79, above.

82 Interview with Dorothy Borg, Columbia University, New York, November 28, 1983. Borg was an AIPR Research Associate from 1939 to 1958. Her book, American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, was published by the IPR in 1947.

critical fix on the question within only weeks of the Japanese surrender.[83] "It is evident," the editorial noted,

> that far from upsetting the status quo in other countries, American policy, more often than not, has the effect of strengthening the status quo, to the benefit of ultra-conservatism and the detriment of liberal forces among the peoples.... The United States regards itself as the world's leading democracy. It is time that our overt or furtive support of the ultra-conservative status quo in the countries and colonies of Asia be replaced by frank effort to encourage the peoples of these countries to develop along genuinely democratic lines.

The closing months of 1945 revealed a significant diversity and volume of opposition to United States Asian--and often Indochina--policy, a fact that has been largely overlooked by historians of the Vietnam War. The argument that the opposition was merely an activity of Trotskyists or pacifists, and therefore not worthy of serious consideration, is clearly not valid. In fact, in the case of the latter, there appears to be little evidence that pacifists were particularly interested or vocal in criticizing United States Indochina policy during this period. As this chapter has shown, opposition to United States Asian policy was diverse, ranging from State Department insiders and Members of Congress, to mainstream political commentators like Walter Lippmann and a host of moderate and liberal journal-

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83 "Support of the Status Quo", Far Eastern Survey, October 24, 1945, 297.

ists and such well-known writers as Pearl Buck.

To be sure, the far left contributed its fair share to the foreign policy debate, but their arguments, and those of the far right, did not exist in isolation, and often overlapped with those of more mainstream critics, all of whom were, after all, Americans who espoused what were considered to be tradiitional American anti-colonial principles. This explains, for example, the ease with which people at various points along the political spectrum could point to, and be inspired by, the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms--as did the Vietnamese nationalists--and lament the "betrayal" of Roosevelt's foreign policy by the Truman Administration. Though the perspectives varied considerably, and relations among the various components were often disputacious, the Atlantic Charter stood as a form of symbolic common ground.

In 1945 the success of the Asian policy opposition was limited. The objective here is not to argue, in any case, that it did affect policy to any significant degree but rather to identify and describe its diversity, and show that it was an integral part of the debates and societal upheavals of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Yet there may have been some measure of success at the end of 1945. Perhaps in partial response to all those who did express them-

selves, in telegrams, letters, editorials, articles, books, floor debate, speeches before various citizens groups and elsewhere, the American troopship movement to Vietnam came to an end in 1945.[84] On January 15, in fact, the Department of State informed the Secretary of War that it was against United States policy to

> employ American flag vessels or aircraft to transport troops of any nationality to or from the Netherlands East Indies or French Indochina, nor to permit the use of such craft to carry arms, ammunition or military equipment to these areas.

Then again, it may simply have been a function of the wartime agreement between the United States and Great Britain regarding cooperative use of troop transports having run its course.[85] Whatever the case, it was like closing the proverbial barn door after letting the horse out. The deed was done, the troops had been moved and France had been helped significantly by the United States to regain a footing in its one time "balcony on the Pacific" in Vietnam. And, as the policy opposition suspected and, in some cases, proved in the following and subsequent years. American policy makers would find many other ways to help France, quietly, before once again sending fully loaded merchant ships crewed by American citizens--this time in

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84 The Pentagon Papers, Book 1, Part I, A.,PA-24; Patti, 380.

85 See footnote 23, this chapter.

1950--to Vietnam and yet another phase of the thirty-year-long war.

Once the United States sailed into the Vietnam War, in 1945, it remained, to one degree or another, to the bitter end. And as long as there was a policy of support for the French in Vietnam--no matter how seemingly non-existent or indirect--there were American citizens protesting to bring that policy to a halt.